

9/21/11

To: Illinois Commission on Human Services

I am Janie Edwards. I come to you today excited to tell my story to a group of people who will listen, but worried and depressed because of past and future budget cuts. I am here to ask you to pass Senate Bill 2407 in order to keep 20,000 people from losing their health care.

My story may be a little different than some as I have physical impairments as well as mental impairments. I have vertigo, carotid arteries in my neck and bad peripheral vision. I have never been able to drive a car. When I was younger I took all forms of public transportation to get to college and work. I am not able to do that any longer. I now need my homemaker aid. She helps me with housework, laundry, and taking me to stores for my meds and groceries. Sometimes when my vertigo is bad, she helps me with a bath and washing my hair.

I also have bipolar and anxiety. I have been taking meds since my early 20s. I am now 62. I have also had counseling most of that time. I have had group insurance, no insurance, private insurance, and Medicaid. I have also worked at a hospital so I believe I have seen all sides of the story.

We may need budget cuts, but we need to cut the waste not the health benefits for the poor and disabled. The state wants to make too many disproportionate cuts in health services.

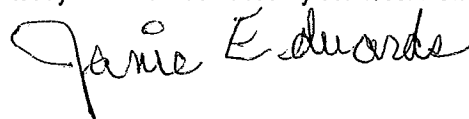
I receive help through the Chestnut Health Systems senior outreach program. I have one nurse that comes to my apartment. She helps me through various things and walks with me. I also have one counselor that comes to my apartment. She talks to me about various topics and helps me through various issues that are stressing me out. I also have a meds nurse that helps me with meds and therapy and this requires me to travel to appointments. I have been fortunate enough to have Faith in Action, a Christian group, drive me to most of my appointments. I used med cabs in the past. I know they are refusing many people rides because the state of Illinois owes them so much money.

I need my helpers to keep me in an independent living apartment. I need to keep my dignity and my humanity as a woman and person. I have 2 small grandchildren and I do volunteer work with young people helping them to finish high school and go onto college. I have been involved with NAMI for several years and helped to teach two NAMI peer to peer classes.

Without my helpers, I would have to be in the hospital or long term nursing care. That is much more expensive and besides, I am way too young for that. I live in a building of 46 apartments. One third to one half of these people have homemakers, nurses, or physical therapists to come help them. The tenants are age 30 to 89. We have a sense of community and try to help each other when we can but we need the additional help the nurses and aids provide for us. We do not want to be alone in a nursing home waiting to die. That is a terrifying thought.

So I am here asking you today: PLEASE don't cut my services. Don't cut Medicaid and Medicare.

Janie Edwards



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